Piling of Tobacco Stock

2483. DR. Y. LAKSHMI PRASAD : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether several million kilograms of tobacco stocks are piling up in the State Trading Corporation godowns and in the godowns of the Growers' Co-operative Union; and

(b) if so, the measures taken to rescue the tobacco growers in distress ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Various measures taken to rescue the tobacco growers in distress include, *inter-alia* :

(i) Meeting with representatives of the Reserve Bank of India and in the leading bankers in order to ensure credit flows to the tobacco traders so as to keep the tobacco purchase system flowing;

(ii) Visit of a tobacco trade delegation of 6 members to Libya, Jordan, Egypt and Algeria in February, 2000 to promote Indian exports of tobacco in these countries;

(iii) Visit to another Indian tobacco trade delegation recently to Russia to explore opportunities for greater cooperation between the tobacco industries of the two countries;

(iv) Meeting held with manufacturers, exporters and trades to purchase tobacco at platforms as per requirements indicated while fixing crop size;

(v) Meetings held farmers to solve the situation of over supply;

(vi) Inducting Government agency to enter the market;

(vii) Fresh registration of growers not to be undertaken for the time being.

Trade Deficit

2484. SHRI NARENDRA MOHAN : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) whether it is fact that India's trade deficit for April-December 1999 as 7 billion is marginally lower than that for the previous corresponding period;

(b) what was the anticipated for this period and how this deficit of $7 billion compares with that; and

(c) what are the projections for the period January-June 2000 ?

THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI MURASOLI MARAN) :

(a) As per the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics provisional data the trade deficit during April-December, 1999 has been to the tune of US $ 7038.68 million which is lower than the trade deficit of US $ 7328.42 milloion during the corresponding period last year.

(b) and (c) Trade deficit is the excess of imports over exports. Imports are trade by the trade industry as per the demand of the economy and some essential imports like POL, the prices of which are governed by international factors. Acceleration in export growth also leads to lower trade deficit. A number of steps have been taken to further enhance the export growth which include reduction in transaction cost through decentralisation, simplification of Procedures and various other measures as enumerated in the Exim Policy. Steps have also been taken to promote exports through multilateral and bilateral initiatives, identification of thrust sectors and focus regions.

Technological Capabilities of Indian Industries

2485. SHRI RAMDAS AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state :

(a) the initiatives taken till date to strengthen the technological capabilities of Indian industries both for meeting the national needs and for providing global competitiveness;

(b) the State-wise bodies so far established/set up particularly in Rajasthan and Orissa to facilitate development of new technologies;

(c) what type of support Government are providing to Industries and Institutions carrying Research and development and funds allocated therefor; and

(d) what achievements have been made in our country during the last two years in this regard ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (DR. RAMAN) : (a) The strengthening of the technological capabilities of Indian industry depends on the existence of indigenous technological capabilities and acquisition of selected technology from abroad that complements national research and development efforts and the growth of locally created technology.